



March 22, 2023

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
Chairwoman, Senate Health Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8530
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 238 (Wiener) Health care coverage: independent medical review – Support

Dear Chairwoman Eggman,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists (CSAP), I write to you in support of SB 238, which would require all mental health treatment denials made by commercial insurance plans for children and youth under the age of 21 in California to automatically be referred to the state’s existing Independent Medical Review (IMR) process.

Mental health challenges are the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes among young people. These increases are further exacerbated when we look at the mental health of non-white and marginalized young people. Of those afflicted with mental health issues, thousands receive no treatment due to a denial from their insurance companies.

The statewide IMR process is available to health plan enrollees when their insurance plan denies, modifies, or delays a request for a service as not medically necessary or as experimental or investigational. To go through this process, a consumer must first file a grievance/complaint and participate in a 30-day process with their plan.

While the IMR process allows for greater oversight of health plans, it places the burden on the consumer and delays or prevents children and youth in California from accessing critical, timely mental health treatment. Language barriers, health literacy, and demanding jobs may prevent some parents from filing IMRs, furthering mental health access inequities. Additionally, the current online forms to file a complaint with DMHC are only offered in English and Spanish, which does not reflect the demographics of California families.

Under SB 238 all children’s mental health treatment denials will be referred to the IMR process. This bill will ensure families who do not have the time or ability to file a complaint — or who simply don’t know about the process — would have their claims automatically reviewed and young people will receive faster access to treatment.

For these reasons, CSAP is pleased to support SB 238.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yoder', is placed below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Paul Yoder
Legislative Advocate

CC: Members, Senate Health Committee
Senator Scott Wiener